

OHIO'S FIRST FARMERS

by
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The Fort Ancient culture began to occupy the fertile Ohio River Valleys by approximately 1000 BC. The Fort Ancient people were the first truly agricultural farmers in the central Ohio valley growing beans, sunflowers and most importantly corn. Most likely maize agriculture was acquired from the Mississippians. Agricultural practices allowed these people to live in congregated settlements that was much different than their hunting and gathering ancestors. Availability of stable food sources allowed permanent settlements and villages to prosper in the fertile alluvium valleys. Locally grown corn became the major food staple of the Fort Ancient people. Even though agriculture was the economic food staple, hunting, fishing, and exploiting seasonally available food sources were vital to their diets. From excavations of refuse pits at these village sites, we can decipher that deer were an important part of their diets. It's speculated that Fort Ancient hunters took hunting of deer to its zenith, by the vast number of deer bones recovered in excavated refuse pits and upon village sites. Bones of turkey, fish, elk, and mussel shells, and other small game are also numerous. Excavation of food storage pits reveals that corn, beans, sunflowers, hickory nuts, walnuts, acorns and pawpaw fruits were collected and stored for later consumption.

Shown are artifacts from my collection that represent Fort Ancient influenced cultural expressions needed for life's proliferation.

References/sources:

Robert N. Converse, *The Archaeology of Ohio*,
Archaeological Society of Ohio 2003, pg. 342-346



Figure 1 (Diano) Incised discoidal from the Dr. Meuser collection — Clermont Co., Ohio Meuser - No. 454/5.



Figure 3 (Diano) Personally found Triangular points from Hocking and Fairfield Counties. Two flint celts — Crittenden Co., Ky. and Fairfield Co., Ohio.



Figure 2 (Diano) A fish effigy pipe made of Ohio pipestone — Brown Co., Ohio.